

## Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR EDITORIAL  
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1 HEADED "MEXICO'S RIGHT MAN AT RIGHT  
TIME."

2. THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME. THIS IS WHAT JOSE  
LOPEZ PORTILLO APPEARS TO BE AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS TERM  
AS MEXICO'S NEW PRESIDENT. HE IS LESS A POLITICIAN THAN  
AN ECONOMIST AND ADMINISTRATOR, AND MEXICO'S CURRENT  
PROBLEMS, SOME OF CRISIS PROPORTIONS, NEED THESE VERY  
SKILLS.

3. FOR EXAMPLE:

-- OUTGOING PRESIDENT LUIS ECHEVERRIA ALVAREZ TOOK  
A NECESSARY STEP IN LETTING THE VALUE OF THE PESO FLOAT  
DOWN TO A MORE REALISTIC LEVEL. BUT HE FAILED TO MANAGE  
THE SITUATION SUFFICIENTLY TO MINIMIZE FINANCIAL TURMOIL.  
HERE MR. LOPEZ PORTILLO'S OWN MANAGERIAL STRENGTHS SHOULD  
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COME INTO PLAY. IT IS RECALLED THAT IT WAS HE WHO, AS

MINISTER OF THE TREASURY UNDER ECHEVERRIA, PRESIDED OVER THE CUTS IN SPENDING AND INCREASES IN TAX COLLECTION THAT

BROUGHT MEXICO'S INFLATION RATE DOWN FROM 22 PERCENT TO 10 PERCENT DURING 1974 AND 1975.

-- PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AGAIN APPEARED TO ACT UNWISELY ON AN APPROPRIATE IMPULSE WHEN HE RESPONDED TO PEASANT DEMANDS FOR LAND BY SUDDENLY EXPROPRIATING MORE THAN 200,000 ACRES AND TRANSFERRING IT TO THEM. NOT ONLY DID THIS GRANDSTAND PLAY SHAKE UP THE LANDOWNERS AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY, IT ALSO BROUGHT PROTESTS ABOUT UNFAIR DISTRIBUTION OF THE EXPROPRIATED LAND. PEASANTS HAVE LEGITIMATE COMPLAINTS THAT LAND-REFORM PROMISES TO THEM HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY KEPT OVER THE YEARS, AND THEY HAVE BEEN MAJOR VICTIMS OF THE DISPARITIES IN MEXICO'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS. ONCE MORE MR. LOPEZ PORTILLO HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE HIS ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS IN FINDING THE PATH TO EQUITY.

4. BUT OBVIOUSLY HE WILL HAVE TO HONE HIS POLITICAL SKILLS AS WELL. MR. ECHEVERRIA WAS ABLE TO KINDLE THE IMAGINATION OF MEXICAN YOUTH (AND HALF THE POPULATION IS NOW UNDER 16), THOUGH HIS RHETORIC COULD RING HOLLOW IN RELATION TO SOME OF HIS PRACTICES. HE ALSO BROUGHT MEXICO TO INCREASED PROMINENCE IN THE THIRD WORLD, THOUGH AT THE EXPENSE SOMETIMES OF RELATIONS WITH BIG-NEIGHBOR UNITED STATES.

5. MR. LOPEZ PORTILLO WILL NEED TO BUILD ON THE BEST OF MR. ECHEVERRIA'S POLITICS AND REJECT THE WORST. HE WILL ALSO NEED TO BE ALERT TO MR. ECHEVERRIA'S APPARENT INTENTIONS OF CONTINUING TO EXERT POWER THROUGH HIS LEGACY OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ALIGNED WITH HIM -- AND THROUGH ACQUISITION OF LARGE NEWSPAPER AND BROADCASTING INTERESTS. (FORTUNATELY, MR. ECHEVERRIA FAILED TO SQUELCH THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW WEEKLY EDITED BY A JOURNALIST HE HAD HELPED TO PUSH OUT FROM THE EDITORSHIP OF THE LEADING UNCLASSIFIED

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NEWSPAPER, EXCELSIOR.)

6. ALREADY MR. LOPEZ PORTILLO HAS SHOWN A PROMISING POLITICAL SENSITIVITY IN THE LOW PROFILE HE KEPT SINCE HIS ELECTION IN JULY. DURING THE U.S. POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, HE QUIETLY VISITED PRESIDENT FORD AND AIDES OF JIMMY CARTER. HE IS KNOWN TO WANT TO MAKE PROGRESS ON SUCH PROBLEMS AS THE ILLEGAL EMIGRATION OF MEXICANS TO

THE U.S., THE ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFIC. AND DECLINING U.S.

INVESTMENT IN MEXICO. IT LOOKS AS IF HE IS ON THE WAY  
TO DRAINING SOME OF THE BITTERNESS LEFT BY MR. ECHEVERRIA,  
AND WHICH THE LATTER, TOO, WAS AMELIORATING.

7. NONE OF THIS IS TO MINIMIZE THE ENORMOUS CHALLENGES  
FACED BY THE NEW PRESIDENT -- ALL OF THEM INTENSIFIED  
BY THE BASIC PROBLEM OF FAST-GROWING POPULATION. WE  
JOIN THE DIGNITARIES AT HIS INAUGURATION IN WISHING HIM  
WELL. (END TEXT.) ROBINSON

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